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What a week in the world of technology! The major news, of course, is the
verdict handed down against Microsoft - guilty of antitrust violations. I
don't think that the outcome of this case was surprising. And I'm also not
surprised that a pre-verdict settlement was not reached. Now we'll just
have to wait a couple of months to find out what penalties will be doled
out against Microsoft.

Atari's Jack Tramiel was often quoted as saying that "business is war."
But, even in war - and as stupid as it may sound - there are certain rules
of conduct. Apparently, Microsoft failed to live up to those rules. No one
likes a bully.

Last week I mentioned I felt terrible. Well, I broke down and saw a doctor.
Since my bout with pneumonia a few years ago, I get a little nervous when
similar symptoms appear and don't go away in a reasonable length of time.
Anyway, it turned out that I had no traces of bronchitis or pneumonia. The
likely culprit was allergies. I guess that it's already turning out to be a
bad time for allergy sufferers due to a reasonably dry winter and warm early
spring. What bothers me, besides the allergies, is that I'm usually not
bothered by such things! I've known that I have been allergic to most of
the common things that cause allergies, but I don't usually have the typical
reactions. This year it's different. I guess I'll have to suffer while
trying to reduce some of the symptoms with medications. Life goes on.

Until next time...

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                     PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                    compiled by Joe Mirando
                     jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I can't believe how fast the days seem to
be going by. It seems that autumn was only yesterday, and now it's
spring already. I know that most people would be happy if we could skip
the cold weather of winter, but I kind of like it.

I know, I've mentioned that a lot lately. But it's true. There's simply
nothing like a chilly evening spent looking through a frosty window at
whatever happens to be in your field of view.

I guess that there are some of you shaking your heads as you read this
and saying, "Is he out of his damned mind? He wouldn't be saying that if
he lived here." And you're probably right. Here in the Northeast we have
real winter, but not what you'd see if you lived in Kodiak, Alaska. I can
AFFORD to think it's nice. <grin>

Soon enough the temperature will rise to the uncomfortable range and
we'll take refuge in air conditioning and ask each other, "Is it hot

enough for ya?" Darn, I hate that.

I'm not even going to try to tie this line of thought to something to do with Atari computers. I mean heck, we all know what we like and what we don't. You don't need me constantly reminding you of the reasons you like Atari computers, do you? You know as well as I do that they have their own personalities. I guess that maybe computers don't become "cookie cutter" until after a certain amount of them are made. The PCs I use are, by and large, fine machines representing the best that hardware technology has to offer. But they just don't have any personality like my old 1040 did. It and its family... the Stacy, MegaSTE, and TT... all have their own personalities. It's kind of nice to feel that familiarity in a machine. It's something I don't expect to see in another computer. At least not until 'the next big thing' rears its head.

Well, that's enough of that. Let's take a look at what's going on with the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Christer Backroos asks:

"Does anyone know if the author of ghostlink ever released a version which would work through the parallel port?

He mentions it in documentation but I've never found a version supporting this..

Or do you know if there are sources available somewhere, I think I could be able to do the parallel modification to code by myself..

ps: I'm quite happy now since just yesterday I got a 1040Ste for myself with 4megs of ram. A nice improvement from a 520Stfm with 512kb of mem."

Derryck Croker tells Christer:

"Why not try PARCP? Does the same job. Try Petr Stehlik's (sp) mirror site at http://www.cyberstrider.org if it's still there."

Iggy Drougge asks about graphics cards for the MegaSTE/TT:

"Seeing as the VME slot is rather widespread, how come no-one
 has written any drivers for cards not expressly designed for atari use? This could solve the Ethernet problem, too."

Martin-Eric Racine tells Iggy:

"Mainly because commercial VME cards are considered industrial equipment and sell with a correspondingly high price tag.

Also, several manufacturers flatly refuse to provide programming docs or open source drivers. They support mainly OS9 and that is the only thing used on the VME market, in their opinion.

Mind you, that also applies to a variety of LocalTalk products.

For instance, some years ago, someone on the STiK development list pointed out that LocalTalk to Ethernet adapters sold for

very cheap, so I contacted several manufacturers (Fallaron, etc.)
and asked if it would be possible to have either driver sources
or API docs to write drivers from a non-Mac OS. "We haven't sold
any of those in ages and either ways, we are not considering
revealing any of our development specs to any third-party."

Same answer for their previous SCSI-Ethernet adapters.

(both LocalTalk and SCSI adapters were quite popular on m68k
Macs, because they did not come with a built-in Ethernet port)

For VME products, people are slightly more open (e.g. some of the
companies have programming API documents they openly share with
their multi-billionaire customers, pending an NDA signature) but
even their standard catalog items are overpriced. For instance, I
tried contacting BWVM to get them to produce another run of their
VME Ethernet card. Well, even their bog standard card would have
sold for twice the price of an already expansive Riebl VME card
from Best Electronics.

To answer another question in this thread, the reason why some of
those cards are supported by NetBSD is that certain VME computer
systems (e.g. m68k-based SUN) are now considered obsolete by the
industry and being dumped for very cheap by second-hand retailers
or educational institutions, so people cannibalize the cards from
the complete systems and stuff them in their TT running NetBSD."

John Kolak asks about converting USB to serial:

"Anyone have any idea how to connect a USB equipped iBook to an Atari
serial port? Is this simple like a null-modem adaptor, or are the specs
on the two kinds of serial too different?"

Lonny Pursell tells John:

"I think they are far too different, you cannot just connect them.

Also the Atari is not "hot swappable" so if you attempt it, make sure
the Atari is powered down."

Edward Biaz asks about HSMODEM on his Hades:

"I have a question concerning HSModem. I have a Hades and am using the
file HA_ESCC.prg. Basically everything is fine. When I am using Cab I
get an average CPS of 7000. My question involves the result I get when
I do a reset. If I do a Control-Alternate-Delete reset, the computer
hangs on the file HA_ESCC.prg in the Auto folder. If I use the reset
button, then things boot all the way through. It also hangs if I use
the shutdown program in Magic and tell it to reboot. Anyone have an
idea as to how I can adjust the HA_ESCC.prg or do something else to fix
this?"

Martin Byttebier tells Edward:

"Very easy. DON'T USE HA_ESCC.PRG, it's buggy as hell. I'm really surprised
you still using it. Just use the scc.prg as found in the HSMODA 7 packet.
This works fine."

Jerry Martin asks about CAB with WDialog:

"I have a rather strange problem at the moment with CAB. This arose
suddenly bout three or four months ago, but I never really got to the
bottom of it. I am hoping someone might have some idea as to what is
the problem.

I am using CAB 2.8 (used to use 2.7c) and have some form of a conflict
with WDIALOG 2.04

When CAB is started with a command line (URL) it does not open the page.
However, while running and if a URL is passed via VA_START, the page is
opened. Just now, I discovered that if I disable WDIALOG in the Auto
Folder, all runs smoothly again (i.e. I can pass CAB a URL hen
starting and it will open)

If you need any more details about my system setup I will be happy to
provide them."

Greg Goodwin asks Jerry:

"Where did you find 2.8? Is it English?"

Derryck Croker tells Greg:

"CAB2.8 is from ASH. The english RSC files can be gotten from my web
site: http://www.cix.co.uk/~derryck/index.htm "

Jerry comes back and posts:

"I have solved the problem! ;-)

A number of months ago, after I registered COMA, I came across a
Fax-Driver for SpeedoGDOS and even though I use NVDI, decided to
install it to see what would happen! Funnily eeough it _almost_ worked.
It registered as a driver under NVDI, and successfully rendered about
25% of any page. After this experiment, I never removed the driver.
However, it seems that this was creating some problem with CAB's
Initialisation, and after removing it, now everything is running
smoothly! Phew!"

Greg Goodwin posts:

"Well, just a note to other enthusiasts, I have been able to get a
fair amount done with Spectre and I am a fan of Dave Small's work. So
feel free to ask any questions.

(And if you are one of those users that managed to get the program
to successfully use system 7 and above, clue me in on how it's done.
If you don't want others to know, you're secret's safe with me)

And as far as PCDitto goes.. got the program, it runs.. how do you
get this program to recognize a hard drive?"

John Kolak tells Greg:

"Gee Whiz, that's an old issue! I once had it running with a hard drive,
but don't remember how. May have hardcopy instructions somewhere around
here. Has something to do with assigning a partition on your hard drive
(unless you want to use the whole hard drive), doing an fdisk and
format. Voila! That's it!"

Miles Howe asks:

"Has anyone been able to use the MagicPC Demo files with Gemulator 2000?"

James Haslam tells Miles:

"I don't think you can! :) MagicPC is a standalone PC program, like
Gemulator, so you can't run one with the other.

ie they are both Atari emulators, that can run Atari software."

Kevin Dermott tells James:

"In the gemulator docs it gives instructions how to do this. it involves
using the magic ram file in place of a tos image one but I never got it
to work. It's just like Magic PC can run a tos image instead of the
magic os but not many people know this either."

Jason Bloomer asks:

"I currently have a Atari 1040 Ste, that has 2 meg of ram in it. I would
like to add 2 more megs. I am wondering what type of memory it takes. I
currently have a bunch of 1mb, 1x8, 30 pin SIMMs, will these work?"

Our good friend Sheldon Winick of The Computer STudio tells Jason:

"They should work just fine. Since you have a "bunch" of those SIMMs, you
might want to install a set of four matching SIMMs. Mixing SIMMs of
different configurations can, in some instances, cause problems."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Enjoy the spring weather while you
can. Soon it will be hot and humid, and we'll all be wishing we had a
few of these cool breezy days to spare. See ya next week, same time,
same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - 'Excitebike 64'! GO Red Sox!
   """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Free Dreamcasts - SegaWeb!
                                  Nuon and Nyko News!
                                  And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
   """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Sega to Unveil Online Gaming, Free Console Strategy

Sega of America Inc., anticipating serious competition in the cut-throat video game business, will unveil on Tuesday a radical shift in its business strategy by offering its own Internet service and giving away to subscribers its Dreamcast video console via a $200 rebate.

Sega, the U.S. unit of Sega Enterprises Ltd., will launch a new company devoted to online gaming called Sega.com, and its own branded Internet service, to be called SegaNet. The high-speed service will let gamers play each other over the Internet with a Sega Dreamcast, which was launched last year.

With a business model not unlike the companies that offer free PCs or Internet devices in exchange for monthly Internet access, Sega will offer a rebate of $200 -- the cost of the Dreamcast game console -- to gamers who sign up for two years of SegaNet Internet service. It expects to launch this service in the fall, at a cost of $21.95 a month.

Subscribers will also get a free keyboard.

Sega also hopes to woo gamers away from PCs, which currently allow users to play a limited number of games over the Internet. Currently, there are no Sega games available online.

Sega launched its comeback attempt in the video game industry last year with the Dreamcast and now faces looming U.S. competition from industry leader Sony Corp. and its much-heralded new Playstation2 this fall. Nintendo Co. Ltd. also is launching a new system next year and now software behemoth Microsoft Corp. has said it plans to enter the market with the X-Box, a game console using PC technology, in the fall of 2001.

''The market is all about leapfrogging each other and the consumer is confused," said Charles Bellfield, a spokesman for Sega. Sega needs to distinguish itself from its rivals, which have hundreds of millions of dollars in their coffers to spend on marketing, so Sega is placing its bets on online gaming and giving its console away for free.

''It's a radical change but a radical change is needed," said Sean McGowan, a video gaming analyst with Gerard Klauer Mattison & Co. ''It's a very risky strategy... This is not a company that is sitting on a ton of cash. They are betting the ranch because they have to. Sega is clearly the weakest financially of all the major players. They have got to do something drastic."

Sega said it will have sold two million Dreamcast units in North America in April since its launch last September. The number is impressive until compared to the Sony Playstation2, which sold over one million units just in its weekend debut last month in Japan.

The company said its goal with its new give-away program is to distribute four million more Dreamcasts by 2001, giving it an installed base in North America of about six million users.

''In the first two years, we will break even," said Brad Huang, the newly appointed president and chief executive of Sega.com Inc. Sega.com, like Sega of America, will be based in San Francisco's Multimedia Gulch district. ''It will be community building." Huang also noted Sega will face a lower cost to acquire its Internet service customers than giants

such as AOL.

Sega is convinced that its target audience -- serious gamers ranging from 12 to 24 years old -- wants to play games over the Internet. The Sega Dreamcast console is the only console that comes with a modem pre-installed. The modem can be popped out and switched for an Ethernet connection for broadband Net access.

''Our audience wants to go the next level," said Sega's Bellfield. ''They want rivalry and competition and they can only get that by competing with each other."

Sega said the attempts by some game developers to make games more difficult using artificial intelligence will not answer the needs of the hard core gamers, because they will eventually learn all the tricks.

Sega said that at launch, it will announce a major Internet service provider as the backbone for SegaNet. The company said SegaNet will be faster than the typical Internet service provider, because it will have its own virtual private network.

About a dozen major games are expected at the launch.

Sega also plans to have a specially designed MP3 player that inserts into the Dreamcast console, in the space which is currently occupied by the visual memory unit, for downloading music from the Internet. The device will cost below $100 and its 64 megabytes of disk space will store about two hours of music.

''The key is they are going to have to execute, the titles are going to have to have tremendous playability," said Michael Gartenberg, an analyst with the Gartner Group. ''It's a very good offensive move on their part to get the online gaming stuff going as quickly as possible."

                    NYKO Technologies Inc. and Hot Products Inc. Join
                  Forces to Propel NUON Video Entertainment Accessories

NYKO Technologies and Hot Products Inc. announced Tuesday a strategic alliance to integrate the design, manufacturing, distribution and marketing of licensed NUON peripherals and accessories under the terms of licenses they both hold with VM Labs of Mountain View, Calif. for utilizing NUON media processing technology.

Under this agreement, both companies will continue to focus on their core strengths. HPI will be responsible for the design, development and manufacturing while NYKO will concentrate on the marketing and distribution of a wide variety of NUON products.

''HPI's engineering and manufacturing expertise is a perfect partner to our distribution strengths," said Robert J. Rienick vice president, sales & marketing for NYKO. ''Having worked together over the past year, we both understand that NUON requires a long-term commitment. This allows both companies to dedicate the necessary resources where they are most needed, especially at launch, and insures an immediate product line-up capable of handling the speed and power of NUON technology."

According to James L. Copland, chairman & CEO of HPI, ''The combined

expertise of our two companies within the accessories and peripherals category will allow us to capitalize on the initial launch of NUON technology by Samsung and Toshiba in the coming months. And while the stunning visual effects and tremendous DVD movie playability will fuel market share gains, we're most excited about the possibility of all future NUON DVDs functioning as a complete video entertainment system, including the family gaming console."

NUON Technology turns a standard DVD player into an enhanced DVD player capable of accessing advanced DVD movie features, interactive game play and Internet web-browsing.

Donald A. Thomas Jr., director of peripheral licensing and promotion at VM Labs stated, ''I am delighted with NYKO Technologies and Hot Products Inc.'s strategic alliance, and fully support the synergy that this combined enterprise will represent for NUON-enhanced products. We fully expect this arrangement to result in numerous additional successful licensed NUON peripheral products over the next few years, and look forward to working closely with these peripheral partners."

Motorola supports the NUON technology, and incorporates it into its NUON-enhanced Streamaster set-top boxes. These set-top boxes are used for delivery of on-demand video services to residential homes throughout the world by the telecommunications industry.

Jim Clardy of the Austin-based Multimedia Systems Division commented, ''Motorola has been working closely with HPI on the development of a line of NUON controller solutions in support of Motorola's global customer network. This newly formed alliance should benefit the retail arena with high-quality NUON peripheral products."

Boston Red Sox End World Series Drought According
to 'High Heat Baseball 2001' Season Simulation

Sosa Outslugs Griffey and McGwire in National League Homerun Race

In their third annual simulation of the upcoming Major League Baseball season, The 3DO Company's High Heat Baseball 2001 game predicted that the hard-luck Boston Red Sox will break their 82 year World Series drought and win the championship, beating the Atlanta Braves four games to two. In a closely-contested National League homerun race, Sammy Sosa bested fellow Central Division rivals Ken Griffey and Mark McGwire in the homerun category, slugging 59 to McGwire's 54 and Griffey's 51.

3DO's High Heat Baseball game has successfully predicted that the New York Yankees would win the World Series the past two seasons, and in 1998 the game accurately foretold that Mark McGwire would smash the homerun record.

The High Heat Baseball 2001 game also predicted the following for the upcoming baseball season:

    Player Awards:
    National League MVP: Larry Walker, Colorado Rockies
    American League MVP: Nomar Garciaparra, Boston Red Sox
    National League Cy Young: Greg Maddux, Atlanta Braves
    American League Cy Young: Pedro Martinez, Boston Red Sox
    National League Batting Title: Larry Walker, Colorado Rockies

American League Batting Title: Bernie Williams, NY Yankees
        National League Homerun Champion: Sammy Sosa, Chicago Cubs
        American League Homerun Champion: Juan Gonzalez, Detroit Tigers

        2000 Division Winners:
        National League East: Atlanta Braves
        National League Central: Cincinnati Reds
        National League West: San Francisco Giants

        National League Wild Card: Houston Astros

        American League East: NY Yankees
        American League Central: Cleveland Indians
        American League West: Seattle Mariners

        American League Wild Card: Boston Red Sox

        Playoffs:
        Atlanta Braves over the Houston Astros in four
        San Francisco Giants over the Cincinnati Reds in five

        Boston Red Sox over the Cleveland Indians in four
        NY Yankees over the Seattle Mariners in three

        Atlanta Braves over San Francisco Giants in five
        Boston Red Sox over the NY Yankees in four

        World Series:
        Boston Red Sox over the Atlanta Braves in six

The High Heat Baseball 2001 game for the PC offers the most immersive
sports experience available without actually taking the field with an
improved, state-of-the-art 3D engine, a dramatic increase in the number of
superstar ''signature" animations, intelligent crowd noise, and an all-new
''smart" camera that takes you to the action like a top television
producer would. New game features include Internet/LAN play of Exhibition,
Season, and Playoff games, a Fast Play mode, and a batting practice mode
that lets you select the type of pitches and where they're thrown, making
it easier for new players to get started down the path to a winning season.
New career and season features include All-Star team selection, manager
profiles and an annual amateur draft bringing even more depth to game play.
The High Heat Baseball 2001 game is also available this month for the
PlayStation game console.

Last year, the High Heat Baseball 2000 game was named ''Sports Game of the
Year" from every major PC gaming publication including PC Gamer, Computer
Gaming World, PC Accelerator, and Maximum PC.

                        Supercross Challenger Brian Mason
                         'Catches Air' With Excitebike 64

In the '80s, ''Flyin' Brian" Mason was one of hundreds of thousands of
kids across the country hooked on motocross by playing Nintendo's video
game, Excitebike for the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES).

Today, Brian rides a real 'excitebike' in five intense Supercross races
backed by sponsorship from Nintendo and its new game, Excitebike 64,

exclusively for the Nintendo 64 video game system.

At 20 years old, Mason is competing in his first full professional Supercross season this year. As part of this sponsorship, he's riding in the last five races of the season for Excitebike 64. This up-and-comer on the Edge Supercross team will do double duty by riding in both the 125cc and 250cc series, a feat that is rarely attempted.

''Excitebike is one of the reasons I started riding, so it's unreal to have Nintendo as a sponsor," says Brian Mason. ''Excitebike 64 has triple jumps and huge air -- just like racing on the circuit -- only the crashes don't hurt!"

Excitebike 64 boasts more than 20 tracks to challenge players' motocross skills including indoor stadiums and massive outdoor environments, with plenty of jumps, bumps and stunts for up to four players. The accurately modeled physics engine maintains the realism of motocross action and tight bike control. Excitebike 64's realistic rider and detailed crash animations give players a sense of being part of the action.

''This is a great opportunity for both Brian and Nintendo," says George Harrison, Nintendo's vice president, advertising and corporate communications. ''Brian's ready to take it to the next level in the same way Excitebike 64 sets new standards in four-player action and custom track design."

As part of the sponsorship, Brian will make personal appearances at local retail outlets in Dallas, New Orleans, Chicago and Las Vegas which are scheduled before the Supercross races this spring. He'll talk about his experiences on the racing circuit, give away Excitebike 64 premiums and challenge consumers to one-on-one races in Excitebike 64. For further details, visit www.nintendosports.com.

''Brian's a hot property on the circuit," says Jim Sirko, manager Sirko Sports Marketing. ''With the help of Excitebike 64 and a lot of hard work, "Flyin' Brian'' hopes to one day join the likes of Nintendo's own Ken Griffey, Jr. and Kobe Bryant."

               Infogrames North America, Inc. Sends Sony PlayStation
                    Soaring with Eagle One: Harrier Attack

It's not World War II but the Hawaiian islands are under terrorist attack again and it's up to you to save the day in Infogrames North America, Inc.'s latest PlayStation hit, Eagle One: Harrier Attack.

The title, which began shipping to most major retail stores last week, sets players in the midst of international terrorism and covert military operations. Your country needs you, Eagle One, go get 'em!

An underground terrorist group has detonated an electromagnetic pulse device in the air over Hawaii, which has destroyed all lines of communication, rendering U.S. military forces based there useless. The U.S. President responds by deploying a Marine Corps task force led by Eagle One. Using various multipurpose attack planes, the player must regain control of the Hawaiian Islands through 25 adrenaline-pumping missions.

''Eagle One: Harrier Attack isn't your run-of-the-mill flight simulation

game, it is a unique action combat game featuring exciting cinematics, exhilarating missions, and intense fighting action," said David Riley, director of product marketing for Infogrames North America Inc.'s Action/Strategy Label. ''This game will appeal to anyone who likes fast jets, powerful weapons and a cool storyline."

Players will be able to fly up to five different aircraft in the game including the Harrier Jumpjet, an A10 Warthog, an F16 Falcon, a rescue helicopter, and the top secret Raven Stealth jet, each of which demonstrate varying top speeds, accelerations and turning capabilities.

Before being thrown into the action, players can hone their skills with the training option, where players learn about the two different flight modes of Eagle One, Hover mode and Jet mode. Hover mode allows the Harrier to maintain its height and pitch, which is key in performing vertical landings and stabilizing the jet for precision shooting, while Jet mode makes the Harrier behave like a normal jet, providing the speed and agility needed to complete missions quickly.

Trainees will also get briefed on the various weapons, ranging from such standard weapons as canons and rockets, to more advanced mission specific weapons as laser-guided bombs. Lastly, new pilots will learn how to refuel and rearm their aircraft. After training is complete, players move on to the 25 real missions where their skills will be thoroughly tested with air-to-air, air-to-ground and sea-borne objectives.

Eagle One: Harrier Attack also features two-player split screen action with two choices of play, including cooperative mode where players help one another complete the missions, and dogfight mode, where players attempt to get their opponent out of the sky by any means necessary. Whether utilizing the single player or two-player options, players can use the unique instant replay system to relive great stunts and maneuvers made in the last ten seconds.

Developed by Glass Ghost, Eagle One: Harrier Attack is available at an estimated retail price of $39.99 and can be found at most major retail outlets.

            3DO Ships Army Men - World War for the PlayStation

The 3DO Company announced that it has begun shipping the PlayStation game console version of the Army Men - World War game, the follow-up to the best-selling Army Men 3D game, to retail outlets throughout North America and online shopping sites.

The Army Men brand has enjoyed significant success at retail, with the Army Men -Sarge's Heroes game for PlayStation game console, the Army Men game for Game Boy Color, and the Greatest Hits Army Men 3D game for PlayStation game console all appearing currently on the Top 50 Best Selling Videogame Titles as reported by The NPD Group. The Army Men - Sarge's Heroes game blasted to the top of the charts when it appeared last September on the Nintendo64 game system, debuting at #2 on the NPD charts in its first month of retail sales, and remaining in the Top 10 Best-Selling Nintendo Titles for five months.

An all-new episode in the explosive, ongoing war between the Green and Tan Armies, as well as the first time the battle has been waged in the heart of

Tan country on the PlayStation game console, the Army Men - World War game takes the size and scope of the miniaturized conflict to a tremendous and terrifying scale.

Taking a cue from the infamous Battle of Normandy, the Army Men - World War game finds players in command of the Green Army as it attempts to breach Tan soil and establish a beachhead, facing down a withering hail of enemy fire. Only the most cunning and finest military minds will be able to prevent a total rout as they guide their troops through 18 brutal infantry-level missions covering three different terrains and multiple environments including beaches, jungles, war-torn cities, and abandoned countryside settings. A heavy emphasis upon tactical action adds a new strategic element to the gameplay, as combatants vie for control of strategic ground and heavy weaponry such as howitzers, .50-caliber twin machine guns, flamethrowers, grenades, mortars, and bazookas. This time the action is so intense and personal that even the most combat-ready grunts will be packing their bayonets.

In order to survive the deadliest exchange of gunplay ever seen by plastickind, players must seize control of tanks, jeeps, and PT boats and pound the enemy battalions into submission using all-new heavy artillery. This concentrated barrage of firepower must buy time for the green foot soldiers to swarm across the beach, make it to the barbed wire mesh which awaits, and find cover in the shade of the rugged bluffs that overlook the point from which they were deployed. For the sake of their country, these brave ambassadors of the green nation will fight onward through the trenches, though they are besieged by the horrors of war upon all fronts. Victory may be a tenuous hope at best, but only one thing is for certain... surrender is not an option.

''Every war needs its heroes, even the plastic ones," said Trip Hawkins, chairman and CEO of The 3DO Company. ''With the release of the Army Men - World War game we salute the patriotic struggle of the countless unsung generals who have been struggling against the Tan Army in the name of freedom since Day One. It's not a game anymore... this time an entire army lives or dies by their command."

An Epic Struggle Between Good and Evil Ignites on
the PlayStation as Activision Ships Alundra 2

Gamers get ready to wield magic, cunning and the power of the mighty sword when Activision, Inc. ships Alundra 2 for the PlayStation game console. The highly anticipated sequel to the critically acclaimed title Alundra will be available in retail outlets across North America the week of March 20, 2000. Rated ''T" by the ESRB, Alundra 2 will carry a suggested retail price of $39.95.

In Alundra 2, players take on the role of Flint, a renegade swordsman on an epic quest to save the kingdom of Varuna from the sinister Baron who has taken control. As players embark on a fantastical journey through a land filled with unsuspecting danger and adventure, they must confront more than 10 mega-bosses in real-time battles. Dive-bombing ravens and skeletons are among over 40 monsters that gamers must face as they immerse themselves in an all absorbing story.

Players climb, swim, jump and fight through a 3D world as they solve hundreds of action-based puzzles and seek out over 60 hidden items, raging

from herbs and coins to magic amulets, which will aid them in their quest.
In addition, the elements -- earth, wind, fire, and water -- can be
summoned in to assist players in defeating evil foes.

''Alundra 2's immersive graphics and movie sequences draw gamers into a
magical world filled with brainteasing puzzles, mini-games and monster
bosses," said Mitch Lasky, executive vice president, Activision Studios.
''Offering over 40 hours of gameplay, this sequel will electrify and
enchant a wide range of gamers."

Developed by Matrix and produced by Contrail, Alundra 2 has been designed
from the ground up with a real-time, fully 3D polygonal engine and a camera
that can be manually rotated -- allowing for three scalable views. Over two
hours of in-game cut-scenes, voice-overs and a sweeping score combine to
enhance this moving adventure story. Ten mini-games, including a radio
controlled car game, a mining cart race, lots of classic-arcade-style fun
and more are knit into the storyline allowing gamers to earn necessary (and
ultra-rare) items that propel the voyage forward. Hidden puzzle pieces,
ongoing sword mastery, over 20 world map locations and two levels of
difficulty make for challenging, revisited gameplay.

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                    A-ONE's Headline News
                The Latest in Computer Technology News
                    Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

                Judge Finds Microsoft Broke Antitrust Law

A federal judge ruled Monday that Microsoft Corp. broke U.S. antitrust law
by abusing its monopoly in personal computer operating systems.

District Court Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson said Microsoft violated key
parts of the Sherman Act on three of the four main allegations leveled by
the Justice Department and 19 states.

''The court concludes that Microsoft maintained its monopoly power by
anticompetitive means and attempted to monopolize the Web browser market,"
Jackson wrote in a 43-page ruling.

The finding is expected to lead to consideration of penalties to prevent
future violations, remedies that could include breakup of the software
giant.

''Microsoft's anticompetitive actions trammeled the competitive process
through which the computer software industry generally stimulates
innovations and conduces to the optimum benefit of consumers," said
Jackson.

Microsoft promised to appeal Jackson's ruling and said it believed the
legal system would ultimately rule in its favor.

The company's stock, off sharply for the entire day as investors awaited

Jackson's ruling, was halted just prior to the release of the findings. The shares resumed trading at 17:44, are were trading at $90 7/8. down $15 3/8.

In findings of fact issued last November, Jackson had already found that Microsoft's behavior hurt consumers, computer makers and other companies .

Settlement efforts in the case collapsed Saturday when a mediator said he could not bridge wide differences between the parties after four months of effort.

While it is legal to gain a monopoly through skill or luck, it is illegal to use that power to perpetuate a monopoly by preventing competitors from springing up.

Jackson also found that Microsoft tied its Internet Explorer software to its Windows operating system to exclude Netscape's rival product.

But he declined to find that Microsoft's marketing arrangements with computer makers and others amounted to illegal denial of marketing methods to Netscape, which has become a part of America Online Inc. since the trial began nearly 18 months ago.

Justice Department antitrust chief Joel Klein praised the ruling. ''The decision will benefit consumers and stimulate competition and innovation in the high-tech industry," Klein said in a statement.

                    Microsoft to Appeal Antitrust Verdict

Microsoft Corp. said on Monday it would appeal a judge's ruling that the software giant violated U.S. antitrust law, and voiced confidence it would ultimately prevail in the case.

Microsoft co-founder and Chairman Bill Gates also said the ruling would not stop the Redmond, Wash.-based company from creating new products and looking to retool its business for the Internet age.

''We will seek an expedited appeal of this ruling, following a remedies phase and final decree," Microsoft spokesman Tom Pilla said, just minutes after Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson issued his conclusions of law in the case.

In a 43-page ruling, Jackson ruled that the world's biggest software company violated key parts of antitrust law by abusing its monopoly in personal computer operating systems to harm rivals and consumers.

''While we did everything we could to settle this case, and will continue to look for new opportunities to resolve it without further litigation, we believe we have a strong case on appeal," Gates said in a statement.

''Microsoft's past success has been built on innovation and creativity, and our future success depends on our ability to keep innovating in the fastest-moving marketplace on earth," Gates said.

Pilla noted an appeal could be filed only after Jackson decides on legal remedies, a process that will take several months as he weighs proposals from the U.S. Justice Department and the 19 states involved in the case.

``We continue to believe that the legal system will ultimately rule in our favor and uphold our ability to develop new and innovative software products," Pilla said.

Microsoft's general counsel Bill Neukom said in a statement that the company had ``strong grounds" for an appeal and that government regulation of the software industry would stifle innovation and harm consumers.

``It's important for people to understand that today's court ruling is just one step in a legal process that could last several years," Neukom said.

Jackson's ruling against Microsoft, which came after months of negotiations between Microsoft and Justice failed to produce a settlement, was widely expected based on his preliminary finding late last year that Microsoft abused a monopoly in PC operating systems to harm consumers and rivals.

News that the talks had collapsed pounded Microsoft shares, sending them down 15 3/8, or more than 14 percent, to 90 7/8 and shaving about $80 billion off the company's market capitalization.

Microsoft, which less than two weeks ago was the most highly valued company in the world, with a market capitalization of more than $560 billion, on Monday was left in the No. 3 spot at $470.46 billion, behind No. 1 Cisco Systems Inc. at $532.15 billion and No. 2 General Electric Co. at $521.47 billion.

After the ruling, the company rose to 92 in after-hours trading. Several Wall Street analysts said on Monday that despite the shadow cast by the lawsuit, which could now drag on for years, Microsoft's business appeared strong, with several new products expected to power growth this year.

U.S. Could Seek Restrictions This Year on Microsoft

The government could seek restrictions on Microsoft Corp. that take effect this year, long before the landmark antitrust case works its way through higher courts, experts said Tuesday.

District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson ruled Monday that Microsoft committed serious violations of the nation's antitrust laws, opening the way for consideration of penalties in the final phase of the trial that may end in October.

But because the appeals process could stretch the case until 2002 or beyond, some experts think the government should seek interim restrictions as a way to restrict Microsoft sooner.

A Justice Department spokeswoman had no comment.

``I do expect for the government to ask for some intermediate relief," said Herbert Hovenkamp, a professor at the University of Iowa college of law who has co-written an important treatise on antitrust law and consulted for the government on the case. Hovenkamp said he has not, however, talked to the government about the possibility.

Jackson has ruled Microsoft used its monopoly power in personal computer operating systems to illegally intimidate other firms and preserve that monopoly.

The Justice Department and 19 states which brought the case could ultimately ask for remedies ranging from restrictions on Microsoft's conduct to splitting it into several smaller firms.

But obtaining a tough remedy that would permanently alter Microsoft could take years, so the government would have to seek some lesser change if it wanted quick relief.

Intermediate relief ''is certainly something the Justice Department ought to think about proposing, but because the appeal will not have been heard, appellate courts may be hesitant to approve the granting of such relief," said Harvey Goldschmid, a professor of law at Columbia Law School.

At a minimum, Goldschmid said, the seeking of intermediate relief may have the salutary effect of resulting in an expedited appeal.

''I think that would be very healthy," Goldschmid said.

Soon after Judge Jackson announced his ruling Monday, Microsoft said it would seek an expedited appeal of the ruling at the conclusion of the trial's next phase.

Any appeal by the company or request for intermediate measures from the government would have to wait until the Judge issues remedies, expected by October.

Several lawyers who read Jackson's decision said it appeared to have been written carefully, with an eye on higher courts.

''The decision for the most part followed established (legal) precedent and so the issue on appeal is more likely to be factual issues," said Mark Schechter, an antitrust lawyer with Howrey & Simon.

Attacking Jackson's findings of fact, which were issued months before his conclusions of law, will be tough, Schechter said. Microsoft will have to show that Jackson was ''clearly erroneous."

But Joseph Sims, an antitrust lawyer with Jones, Day said that there were relatively few cases under the portion of antitrust law used against Microsoft, so that the company would easily be able to find precedents that support its views.

''This is an area where there's something for everybody out there in the case law," he said.

Steven Newborn of Clifford Chance said that if Microsoft is able to win at the U.S. Court of Appeals level, and Texas Gov. George Bush, a Republican, is elected president, the firm might be able to reach a favorable settlement.

Otherwise, the Justice Department could appeal a losing appeals court decision to the Supreme Court.

Judge To Decide Microsoft Penalty

The judge overseeing Microsoft's antitrust case must now decide what

punishment to mete out: Slice the software giant into Baby Bills? Impose a hefty fine? Force Microsoft to reveal its secret software code to rivals?

U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson will spend the next few months trying to determine the best way to craft a remedy that won't hamper the company's ability to innovate in an industry changing at warp speed.

Unlike the judge's ruling Monday - a sweeping verdict that handed the government a powerful but anticipated victory after nearly two years of legal wrangling - the punishment Jackson will dispense is uncertain. He will hold hearings to explore the options, taking into consideration recommendations from Microsoft, the Justice Department and 19 states involved in the case.

''The dilemma for the judge and for the Justice Department is how to make the remedy effective without making it overly regulatory," said Warren Grimes, an antitrust expert who teaches law at Southwestern University School of Law in Los Angeles.

Joel Klein, who heads the Justice Department's antitrust division, offered few hints at what remedy the government would seek, other than one ''that will protect consumers, innovation and competition by putting an end to Microsoft's widespread and persistent abuse of its monopoly power, and to rectifying its unlawful attempt to monopolize the Internet browser market."

The options before Jackson range from breaking up the company that made founder Bill Gates a billionaire to ordering Microsoft to change its business tactics.

Among the milder options: prohibiting Microsoft from using price as a way to punish clients who deal with competitors and forcing the company to relinquish control of the first screen most people see when they turn on their computers. Microsoft also could be ordered to license, if not completely surrender, the lucrative blueprint, the so-called ''source code," for its Windows software.

While the government reportedly dropped its pursuit of a company breakup during recent settlement attempts, Jackson's ruling may have emboldened Justice attorneys to ask for the toughest penalty possible.

There are several scenarios for breaking up the company, said attorney Glenn Manishin, who helped write a study for a prominent trade association that endorsed a divestiture. The judge could split up Microsoft into companies selling separate products, such as Windows software and Internet content, or break it into several ''Baby Bills" or ''Mini-Microsofts" each with identical products.

''The drastic is the most effective and the most conservative approach to dealing with a monopoly," Manishin said. The alternative is a set of court-enforced provisions that rarely curb behavior effectively, he said. Such an injunction, Manishin said, would be a ''black hole of judicial regulation."

''Black holes suck up everything around them - it would suck up all the resources of the Justice Department, all the time of the judge, and all the competitors would be focused on one courtroom in Washington where they would run when they had a complaint about Big Brother Bill," he said.

Jonathan Zuck, president of the Association for Competitive Technology, a

pro-Microsoft group, said the idea of breaking up the company is ''clearly universally recognized as ludicrous."

''The whole point of a remedy is it's supposed to do some good. It's not meant to be punitive," Zuck said. ''So no matter how mad the (plaintiffs) may be at Microsoft, remedies are supposed to create a better environment."

Grimes acknowledged that a company breakup may not ride well with the public, whose opinion may be a factor to Jackson, but it may be the easiest way to enforce antitrust laws.

''Once it's broken up, you don't need to supervise it anymore because you just have competing companies," he said. ''Whereas, if you try to use behavioral sanctions that have to be monitored, you end up with the potential for a lot of government supervision of Microsoft's behavior, and no one wants that."

Of course, remedy hearings could be avoided altogether if both sides revive attempts to settle the case out of court.

''That's always a possibility," said William Kovacic, an antitrust expert at George Washington University. But with Jackson's ruling backing the government, ''the price to Microsoft of getting out just went up."

Judge Sets May 24 for Microsoft Penalties Hearing

The judge in the Microsoft Corp. antitrust trial on Wednesday set May 24 for an expedited hearing on penalties, as Chairman Bill Gates came to town to lobby lawmakers and appear at a White House conference.

In his order, District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson also said the Justice Department and the states which together brought the case could file proposed remedies separately if they disagreed on their approach.

Jackson ruled on Monday that Microsoft broke the nation's antitrust laws by illegally using its monopoly in personal computer operating systems to harm competitors and perpetuate that monopoly.

Jackson set April 25, or at the latest April 28, for a filing of the proposed remedies by the Justice Department and states.

''The plaintiff states shall file any single proposed form of permanent injunction preferred by a majority of the plaintiff states if at variance with the version proposed by the United States," Jackson ordered.

A majority would be 11 of the non-Justice Department plaintiffs, which are 19 states and the District of Columbia.

Microsoft is to reply by May 10, and the Justice Department and the states are to reply by May 17.

The speedy schedule, on which all sides agreed, means that the case will be completed this year in the trial court. That would set the stage for a quick move into appellate courts, or possibly a direct move to the Supreme Court.

Jackson told the parties Tuesday he wanted to get the case to an appeals court as quickly as possible, perhaps straight to the Supreme Court, in as few as 60 days. The Supreme Court can hear a direct appeal from the trial court decision in major antitrust cases brought by the government.

''My transcendent objective is to get this thing before an appellate tribunal -- one or another -- as quickly as possible because I don't want to disrupt the economy or waste any more of yours or my time," Jackson said according to a transcript of the meeting released late on Tuesday.

But after meeting with Gates, Republican Sen. Slade Gorton, who is from Microsoft's home state of Washington and one of its staunchest supporters in Congress, said that the firm is not in favor of an expedited appeal. He said Microsoft would prefer to appeal Judge Jackson's ruling to a federal circuit court of appeals, widely regarded as more conservative than the Supreme Court.

''I think that it is safe to say that Microsoft would prefer that it go through the regular process," Gorton told reporters.

If the Supreme Court agrees to an expedited appeal, it would bypass the U.S. Court of Appeals in the District of Columbia. The appeals court in 1998 dealt the Justice Department a major defeat in an earlier, related Microsoft case, overturning a decision by Judge Jackson.

Less than a mile down Pennsylvania Avenue from Jackson's chambers, Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates was due to appear later Wednesday at a White House conference on the so-called New Economy, the spectacular growth powered by computing and high-speed communications.

Gates spent the morning meeting with groups of lawmakers on Capitol Hill. Those who were present at the meetings said he talked briefly about the trial but mostly about the future of technology.

At a private meeting with Republican members of the House of Representatives, Gates was asked if a new administration would make a difference in the outcome of the case. Gates replied: "Probably yes," according to two lawmakers who were present.

With presidential elections set for November, both lawmakers said Gates did not mean that as a partisan remark, but meant that either a new Democrat or Republican administration would make a difference.

Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush early in March made comments supportive of Microsoft, although aides later said he was neutral in the case and would simply prefer it was settled out of court.

Gates also met with Democrats. Senator Kent Conrad, from North Dakota, said Gates had focused most of his remarks on the New Economy issue and for the most part had not discussed the trial.

Netscape Releases New Browser With Hopes Trimmed

Netscape, makers of the Web-browsing software at the heart of the U.S. government's antitrust case against Microsoft Corp., is set to unveil on Wednesday a much-delayed upgrade that marks the sharply curtailed ambitions

of the once pioneering program.

Netscape 6, the latest version of the program millions rely on as their primary window to the Internet, will be introduced at a trade show in Los Angeles by officials of America Online Inc., which acquired Netscape last year.

But the software which created the first Internet explosion and once held nearly a 90 percent market share, faces an uphill battle against Microsoft's Internet Explorer, which now ships in every Windows PC and holds nearly 70 percent of the market.

Much of the Microsoft antitrust trial has centered on Microsoft's tactics versus Netscape. On Monday, the U.S. judge in the case ruled that Microsoft's actions violated antitrust laws by attempting to monopolize the browser market.

''This used to be a debate between Coke and Pepsi. But the discussion is no longer whether a particular brand of flavored soda sells well," said Clayton Ryder, an industry analyst with Zona Research of Redwood City, Calif.

For while the Netscape Web software has been plagued by delays in introducing new features, Microsoft has pumped out new versions that allow faster access to data and printing, simplify use of audio and video, and other improvements.

''The discussion has become how does this fit in as part of a fuller meal?" Ryder said, referring to Microsoft's success in making Internet Explorer the standard to which many companies now develop new Internet programs.

Netscape's new software is the result of a drawn-out effort known as the Mozilla open-source project -- a volunteer network of independent Internet programmers who banded together more than two years ago to keep Netscape browser development alive.

The company chose to forego the release of the fifth generation of Netscape last summer, offering users of Netscape incremental changes to its Netscape Navigator 4.7 program.

Under America Online, the Netscape browser has been transformed from a single, monolithic product into a set of component technologies that are used not simply in Netscape 6 but have been licensed to a variety of other industry players.

Instead, Netscape developers have focused on making the new software more easily customizable and ready to run on software alternatives to the Microsoft Windows operating system that dominates on personal computers.

AOL has licensed the so-called ''Gecko" browser technologies at the core of Netscape to IBM, Intel Corp., Liberate Technologies Inc., NetObjects Inc., Nokia, Red Hat Inc. and Sun Microsystems Inc for use in separately branded products.

AOL also is using the technology behind Netscape 6 as the core of its ''AOL Anywhere" strategy, a bid by the world's top Internet services company to distribute Web services not only on PCs but via television, cellphones and handheld computers.

Ryder said the Netscape browser has become increasingly irrelevant among commercial Internet users. Instead, it has reverted to something akin to the original Mosaic browser, which popularized use of the World Wide Web in 1993.

''Netscape is not terribly different from its predecessor, NCSA Mosaic: it's got free distribution, it's become something of a toy, a research project, something techies like to play with," Ryder said. ''Have we come full circle?" he asked.

Netscape Unveils Browser Update

Netscape Communications Corp. on Wednesday unveiled the long-awaited update of its Web-browsing software in a bid to usurp Microsoft Corp.'s dominance of the way people travel the Internet.

Netscape, bought by America Online last year, also announced a deal with Gateway to build a family of small, home Internet appliances designed to use Netscape 6. They would include a small, tablet-like screen that users can carry from room to room while surfing the Web.

Netscape 6 is faster and far more flexible than other Internet browsers, AOL Chairman Stephen Case said in a speech touting the new browser and appliances at the Internet World 2000 conference.

The browser is designed to be easily adapted for use in settop boxes, cellular telephones and other devices. Users also can modify the appearance and some functions to suit their personal tastes.

''These new initiatives are part of our AOL anywhere strategy of embedding the efficiency and convenience of the Internet into people's everyday lives," Case said. "... It's nothing less than the start of the second Internet revolution."

Once the leading browser, Netscape was surpassed by Microsoft's Internet Explorer after Microsoft began giving its software away and bundling it with its dominant Windows operating system.

Microsoft's pre-eminence is such that even AOL features Explorer as the preferred browser for jumping subscribers of its online service to the broader Internet. In exchange, AOL was given a prominent link in the Windows operating system, which runs 90 percent of the world's personal computers.

That arrangement is likely to continue for the foreseeable future, said Barry Schuler, president of AOL's Interactive Services Group.

Microsoft's dominance of the browser market became a key element of the government's antitrust case against the software giant. In a news conference, Schuler declined to comment on U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson's ruling on Monday that Microsoft illegally attempted to monopolize the browser market.

''It's been a hard time for Netscape," Schuler said, referring to its loss of market share. ''We've been heads down trying to develop products."

Whether Netscape can regain any of the ground it lost remains to be seen,

an analyst said.

''Most people choose browsers based on religious preference. They don't choose them based on real performance differences," said Harry Fenik, executive vice president of Zona Research.

AOL Launches AOL Plus to Deliver Multimedia Content

America Online Inc. said on Tuesday it launched AOL Plus, which delivers multimedia content and features to subscribers using AOL 5.0 over any high-speed connection, marking one of its first steps toward the long-awaited introduction of high-speed access on AOL.

Downloading the technology will let the interactive services giant's members use AOL Plus' multimedia content and features, which include full-motion video and streaming audio.

AOL Plus is available to any of the company's subscribers using its 5.0 software over a broadband connection and AOL 5.0's ''speed detect" feature will be introduced this week, marking a full-fledged introduction of the service. A company spokeswoman declined to comment on how long AOL Plus had been in a testing phase.

At launch time, AOL Plus will provide content and features from a host of players including CBS MarketWatch.com, CNet Networks Inc., CNN and Launch Media Inc. will provide music video content to AOL members.

Over the next several months, AOL Plus will expand to include shopping, games, autos and real estate content.

''Our goal in developing AOL Plus was to set new standards for streaming video and audio programming while offering AOL members the easiest-to-use, most reliable broadband content experience online," said Jonathan Sacks, senior vice president of AOL Interactive services, in a statement.

Microsoft Takes Aims at AOL in Internet Access War

Microsoft Corp. said on Tuesday it would give away six months of Internet access service as part of a new $40 million marketing blitz aimed at stealing market share away from the industry leader, America Online Inc.

The three-month promotion marks the software giant's biggest push to add subscribers to its revamped MSN Internet service provider, Yusuf Mehdi, MSN vice president of marketing, said in an interview.

Under the deal, customers who subscribe to one year of MSN service would get the first six months free, Mehdi said. The last six months would cost the standard $21.95 a month, which is comparable to competing services.

''We're taking it to the next level," Mehdi said. ''No other major ISP (Internet service provider) is doing this.

The new campaign comes on the heels of a promotion that gave customers who signed up for three years of service $400 worth of merchandise at retail

partners such as Radio Shack.

The promotion -- announced a day after a federal judge ruled Microsoft had
violated antitrust laws by abusing its monopoly in personal computer
operating systems -- also raises the stakes in the highly charged race to
usher people into cyberspace.

''They've got a lot of room to make up," said Alan Alper, an analyst with
technology research firm Gomez Advisors. "Whether its too little, too
late, who knows? But they're at least trying."

Microsoft, toughing it out not only with AOL but also smaller services like
AT&T Corp.'s WorldNet and EarthLink Corp., overhauled MSN last year,
jazzing up its content offerings and bringing in new management.

''Microsoft has tried very hard to become the choice for the Web-savvy
individual," Alper said, adding that MSN was really a hybrid business
combining Web access with Internet directory services in the style of
so-called ''portals" like Yahoo! Inc.

''They've evolved from an online information service into a collection of
properties fronted through MSN, with Web access built in," Alper said.

Although with 2.5 million subscribers, MSN lags far behind AOL's 22
million, Medhi said he thought Microsoft was building steam, pointing to
figures that showed the company netted half a million new subscribers in
the last four months.

''I think the momentum is shifting now to MSN," Mehdi said.

The marketing campaign would include advertising during top TV shows such
as ''Who Wants to Be a Millionaire". Microsoft would also mail out 13.5
million CDs containing MSN software. to do in-store promotions, Mehdi said.

Mehdi said he hoped the promotion would attract as many as 1 million new
users over the next three months, although he said the ''churn", or number
of customers who quit the service, would be hard to predict.

Mehdi also gave a glimpse into Microsoft's hopes for the MSN unit, saying
that the access business and the MSN.com Web site would be the foundation
of many Internet services and help drive sales of the Windows operating
system and of the Office suite of business software.

''Ultimately Microsoft is preparing for the day when it's less of software
company and more of a services company," said Gomez Advisor's Alper.

                    FBI Investigating Computer Virus That Calls 911

A computer virus that could disrupt 911 emergency services is being
investigated after it was detected in the Houston area, the FBI said in a
statement on Monday.

Search warrants were issued in the case last week but no arrests have been
made, said a spokesman for the agency, which has made computer security a
top priority since leading Web sites came under cyber-attack in February.

In a statement, the agency said the self-propagating Texas virus erases

hard drives, then causes infected computers to dial 911 emergency telephone numbers and leave the line open.

``A call of this nature could potentially cause local emergency personnel to respond to false 911 calls," the agency said. It said local 911 services in Houston had not detected a "significant increase" in the number of such calls.

The National Infrastructure Protection Center in Washington, D.C., said in a separate statement the virus is not widespread.

``To this point, information and known victims suggest a relatively limited dissemination of this script in the Houston, Texas area," said the statement, which was posted on the Internet.

The NPIC, which is a joint government-private sector agency created in 1998 to assess threats to computer networks and other infrastructures, said the virus was spread by source computers that ``scanned several thousand computers through four Internet service providers (including) America On Line, AT&T, MCI and Netzero."

The virus spreads by attacking computers with Windows operating systems set up to allow users to share files over the Internet, it said.

eBay Reveals Federal Investigations

Online auction company eBay Inc. revealed that the Justice Department has subpoenaed documents relating to an investigation of Sotheby's and Christie's of alleged price-fixing in commissions.

EBay said in a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission on Thursday that the government is seeking information on its changes in commissions and buyer's premiums and ``discussions, agreements or understandings with other auction houses, in each case since 1992."

The request stems from an investigation begun in 1997 of Sotheby's and Christie's. The auction houses, which control 95 percent of the $4 billion worldwide auction market, have said they are cooperating with prosecutors, and news reports have said the auction houses are being scrutinized for failing to charge fees to their wealthiest clients.

In the filing, EBay warned that the cost of providing documents and defending itself in the investigation, the latest in a series, could impact earnings and divert management attention from regular business. The company also said other suits could follow.

EBay spokesman Kevin Pursglove said because of the ongoing investigation, the company cannot comment further on the matter.

In December, the Justice Department's antitrust division requested documents relating to eBay's lawsuit against Bidder's Edge, a company that polls auction sites and lists auctions posted on eBay and other sites.

As such ``aggregate sites" attract customers of their own, they can cut into eBay's own Web traffic and associated advertising revenues. EBay contends it merely wants to have the companies sign licensing agreements, which also require paying the company a fee, to protect its users from

fraud or incorrect information.

The San Jose-based company also revealed the City of New York's Department of Consumer Affairs had requested and received documents in an investigation into consumer complaints about fraud on eBay's site.

Just this week, eBay revealed it had contacted police after winning bidders complained they had not received the merchandise from a California man doing business on the site. Critics say scam artists sell and deliver merchandise on the site for a while, building up positive customer reviews, then defraud dozens of winning bidders in one swoop.

EBay says it gets complaints from about one in every 25,000 transactions - a figure some say is too high, given that it hosts auctions for millions of items daily.

''A large number of transactions occur on the eBay Web site," eBay said in its filing. ''As a result, the company believes that government regulators have received a substantial number of consumer complaints about the eBay Web site which, while small as a percentage of its total transactions, are large in aggregate numbers."

SEC's Levitt Defends Internet Patrol Plan

Responding to a rash of criticism from Congress and privacy hawks, the head of the Securities and Exchange Commission defended a plan to automate its surveillance of the Internet to combat fraud, saying it only monitors materials already in the public domain.

In a rare written statement issued on Wednesday, SEC Chairman Arthur Levitt said the agency has no intention of monitoring or intercepting private communications as some have suggested.

The securities regulator is seeking proposals to purchase software programming that would search out key words on the Internet like ''get rich quick" and other phrases that are typically used in schemes to defraud investors.

''The SEC has never had any intention of intercepting or monitoring private transmissions, including conversations taking place in chat rooms or on e-mail, in the pursuit of Internet fraud," Levitt said.

Two leaders of a Congressional panel said on Tuesday the automated system sought could violate the privacy of Americans. They demanded more details on the SEC's request for proposals and the basis of law the agency was using in the endeavor to monitor and stamp out online fraud.

''We are concerned that this project would unduly impinge upon the privacy rights of ordinary Americans who have nothing to do with securities fraud," said Rep. Michael Oxley, an Ohio Republican and chairman of the House Commerce subcommittee on finance, and the panel's ranking Democrat, Edolphus Towns of New York, in an April 4 letter to Levitt.

Still, the SEC chief defended the plan vigorously, contending that it would not expand the agency's patrol of the Internet but instead free up SEC attorneys to pursue cases instead of surfing the Web for wrongdoing.

''This is no different, in both manner and scope, than finding a newspaper article with the aid of a tool that helps you do so more quickly and exactly," Levitt said.

Approximately 153 cases involving online fraud have been brought by the commission since late 1994, mostly in the last two years, including cases involving stock touting and the posting of false press releases on the Internet in an attempt to drive up or hurt a company's stock price.

''The request for proposals was carefully drafted to require that the contractor chosen respect the privacy of non-public communications conducted over the Internet," Levitt said in the statement.

The request would bar the contractor from using a system that would access private materials on the Internet, he said.

An official from the watchdog American Civil Liberties Union, who had criticized the plan as possibly violating the right to free speech as well as being an illegal search and seizure, said that Levitt's comments were ''somewhat reassuring" but the ''devil is always in the details."

''I think there are still significant questions about whether or not the SEC or any federal agency can collect information about private individuals who are engaging in lawful conduct," said Barry Steinhardt, the ACLU's associate director.

In a letter sent to Levitt on Tuesday, Steinhardt said "Americans should be able to continue to use that tool without fear of government monitoring of lawful speech."

He requested a meeting with the SEC and possibly Levitt to discuss the plan.

A spokeswoman for Rep. Oxley had no immediate comment while a spokesman for Rep. Towns declined to comment.

Privacy Threatened by High-Tech Lifestyle

Forget any notions that Big Brother is after your personal information -- high-tech fridges and mobile phones are more likely culprits, a high-tech security firm executive warned a computer and privacy conference on Wednesday.

As consumers embrace new technology, growing pools of personal data ranging from phone records to shopping habits are freely available on the Internet, said Austin Hill, president and co-founder of Zero-Knowledge Systems Inc.

New Internet-enabled devices, such as fridges designed to work with the Web for grocery shopping and mobile phone networks that constantly track subscribers, are adding to the problem, he said at the tenth annual Computers, Freedom and Privacy conference in Toronto.

''I don't want to live in a world where every single one of my moves is tracked because I happen to want a cell phone or I happen to enjoy getting directions from my car," he said.

''Will I get free McDonald's if I leave a DNA sample at the door?"

To stem that flood of data, a combination of technology, industry self-regulation and government policy must build better dikes for privacy protection, he told reporters following his speech.

Canada, which passed a long-awaited privacy bill late on Tuesday, will force federally-regulated companies to get consumer consent before supplying personal information to a third party.

While that betters the United States -- which has no such legislation -- Canadian shoppers are still exposed because many buy goods on the Internet from U.S. companies.

``No piece of legislation is perfect," Hill said. ``I think it's a starting point."

Governments increasingly are adopting policies to protect consumer data, said Ontario Information and Privacy Commission Ann Cavoukian in an interview. Hong Kong and New Zealand recently introduced such policies and Australia is expected to introduce privacy legislation next week, she added.

``Increasingly the U.S. is being pressured to do something," she said.

But the biggest threat to privacy may lie with the private sector, said Hill. There is no incentive for corporations to ensure their technology does not invade individual privacy.

``We need to start holding companies accountable," he said.

``Privacy will be one of the most impertant issues of the next century -- I believe it will be to the future what civil rights and environmentalism were to this century."

Hill, whose Montreal, Quebec-based company sells a service that veils an Internet surfer in a secret pseudonym, is optimistic despite abundant examples of information abuse.

A U.S. news magazine program was able to compile a family's phone and medical records, credit applications, social security numbers and work records for a few hundred dollars, Hill said.

``It's a mess out there," he said. ``It will be something that we have to fight for at every step of the way."

                    Mylackey.com Does All Your Annoying Errands

Who wants to clean the fish tank and pick up the dry cleaning on a sunny Saturday morning? Now there's Mylackey.com to do all the drudge work in your life.

The year-old Seattle-based company, which provides a range of services on one Web site, plans to expand into seven more cities by the end of the year.

"We'll do anything a customer asks," chief executive officer Brian McGarvey said.

He isn't kidding.

When McGarvey ticks off a list of services his company provides, it sounds like a fraternity initiation.

"Tomorrow we're sending someone to cut firewood," McGarvey said flatly. "We've been asked to pick up dog poop, and even to provide escort service--that one we turned down. We'll do anything that's legal."

On Mylackey.com, consumers can find someone to detail their car ($75), repair their snowboard ($30) or walk their dog--individually or with a pack--($18-$38 for up to 2 hours). Among its most popular offerings are lackeys who run errands for $40 for a 2-hour period.

There's another company offering personal services online--Concierge Confidant in Denver--but the services area isn't fully developed on the Net, said Jupiter Communications analyst Ken Cassar. That's because of the complex logistical problems and the high costs of building infrastructure and a brand name, he said.

Unlike online retailers, which ship products from a central warehouse, service providers "need to build a base of operations wherever they do business," Cassar said.

Financial analyst Vernon Keenan of San Francisco-based Keenan Vision says there are few U.S. cities where a home-delivery business can be profitable and even fewer that will support a concierge service.

"New York is the only one in the states," Keenan said. "That's the only city with a high enough concentration of fussy people willing to pay for a servant."

At Mylackey, one challenge is finding a really good lackey, McGarvey said.

McGarvey enlists established service providers, themselves business owners, and guarantees their work. McGarvey's contract with the masseuses, limousine drivers and truck drivers he employs stipulates that when they answer a Mylackey order, they are Mylackey employees.

The company bonds and insures each worker and they arrive in a lemon-colored company van wearing a Mylackey uniform. In turn, they get a portion of each sale that is a bit smaller than if they had made the sale on their own.

"I'm spending a lot on marketing and bringing in the customers," McGarvey said. "I'm worrying about all the headaches that come with running a business. They want to be with us because all they have to worry about is doing the kind of work they enjoy."

McGarvey came up with the idea for Mylackey while complaining to a friend about how little time he had to pick up his dry cleaning. It started as an idea for an Internet dry-cleaning business and evolved from there.

Because the contracted companies work at a discounted rate, Mylackey doesn't add a service charge. As a result, Mylackey charges the going rates for common services such as dry cleaning, tailoring or house cleaning services, McGarvey said.

"Whether these companies succeed or not depends on how much they have

spend to market themselves," said Jupiter's Cassar. "If they need to spend
$50 million a year to build their brand, then it's going to be rough."

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